Environmental Laboratory
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Information Update

December 30, 1996
Update # 34

1. Historically the EPA has conducted laboratory PE studies to support the various water programs administered by the States and EPA under the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. Because funding for the PE programs has not remained constant the EPA believes that the continued viability of these studies may depend upon the transfer of costs to the user community.

   Because the EPA lacks authority to create a dedicated fund to support PE studies through a user participation fee, the EPA has been exploring alternatives to assign some portion of the program to an organization with the ability to recover costs for a specified component of the PE studies program.

   Currently the EPA is looking at several options for assuring the continuing viability of the PE studies program. All of the options involve transferring all or some component of the PE studies program to organizations other than EPA. A draft report , "Externalization of EPA's Water Laboratory Performance Evaluation Programs," prepared by the EPA describes the options considered, the advantages and disadvantages of each, the estimates of costs to the EPA or user community, and the estimates of time required to implement each option.

   To obtain a copy of the document call the Water Resource Center at 260-7786 or write to the Office of Water Resource Center (RC4100), U.S. EPA, 401 M Street SW, Washington DC 20460. Or on the Internet at the following location: gopher.epa.gov.

   Also, if you have any concerns or comments on how the EPA is dealing with this issue contact:

   Robert H. Huggett
   Assistant Administrator for Research and Development
   202-260-7676
   USEPA Waterside Mall W913
   401 M Street, S.W.
   Washington, DC 20460

   Robert Perciasepe
   Assistant Administrator for Water
   202-260-5700
   USEPA Waterside Mall E1029B

401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Several laboratory organizations and individual laboratories have already expressed the following concerns:

A sole PE provider program should be maintained where EPA would maintain centralized control in setting standards and accreditation in order to assure consistency and equity.

If a multiple provider program is chosen how will consistency of the PE samples from one provider to the next be assured?

The cost to the laboratories is estimated to range from $200/yr. to $2000/yr for each set of proficiency samples depending on the size of the laboratory and the number and type of samples they run.

There will likely be orphan compounds and perhaps even whole programs. If the number of laboratories seeking certification for an individual compound is small, then it would not be economically feasible for the PE providers to produce samples for this compound.

What happens in case of a bad PE study? If the samples fail it will not be possible to fairly evaluate the laboratories. Who bears the cost of repeating a PE study?

Conflict of interest by the PE providers must be avoided. PE providers must be prevented from releasing true values, adjusting statistics, or providing exact duplicate samples with true values to assist their customers in passing PE Samples.

2. ADHS and ADEQ are again co-sponsoring their Environmental Sampling Workshops. The scheduled dates and agendas are as follows:

PART ONE

Core Workshop: January 15 & 16, 1997

- Data Quality Objectives
- Laboratory Terminology
- How to use your Analytical Laboratory
- Data Interpretation/ Evaluation
- Sample Plan Preparation
- Microbiology Sample Collection
- Legal Aspects/Chain of Custody

PART TWO

Surface Water/ Ground Water Sampling: February 19& 20, 1997

- Water Quality Standards and Regulations
- Biocriteria

- Aquifer Protection Permit Standards
- Ground Water collection Techniques and Field Demonstration
- Priority Pollutants
- Surface Water Collection Techniques and Field Demonstration

PART THREE

Soils Gases, Soils and Other Solids: March 19 & 20, 1997

- Soil Sampling Techniques
- VOC Soil Sampling Techniques
- Soil Gas Collection Techniques
- RCRA Regulations & Sampling Considerations
- Solid Waste Regulations-used Oil/ Biosolids
- Special Waste Regulations
- UST Sampling
- Field Demonstrations-Soils, Soil Gases & Hazardous Material

The workshops will be held at:

Arizona Historical Society
1300 N. College Avenue
Tempe, AZ 85281
(602) 929-9499

3. Due to a request, Technical Resources and Training is considering hosting a two day workshop on PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) sometime in the Spring of 1997. We are currently in contact with the FDA in Los Angeles to see if someone on there staff can provide this training. At this point we are considering using Vibrio cholera, which has the shortest incubation time, for this demonstration. Polymerase Chain Reaction is a process whereby DNA from pieces of an unknown organism are cloned and replicated millions of times within a few hours. These DNA bands are then compared with bands obtained from a known specimen to check for the presence of these organisms. This state of the art method can be used to detect the presence of bacteria and parasites and some viruses. In order to determine the feasibility of and the proper location for this workshop, we need to know how many people would be interested in attending. Please respond by fax to (602) 255-1070 if you might be interested in attending this workshop.

4. If you have any questions regarding the Updates, or if you have any technical questions that need clarification, please call Prabha Acharya, Program Manager, Technical Resources and Training, at the Laboratory Licensure numbers.